

Testimony of Maria Busineau
Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut
In Support of HB 5209, An Act Concerning Sexual Assault and
Intimate Partner Violence on Campus
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement
February 11, 2014

Good Morning. My name is Maria Busineau. I am the Program Manager and a Crisis Counselor/ Advocate at the Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut. I have been providing support and advocacy to victims and survivors of sexual violence for over 14 years. I would like to thank the committee and the lawmakers for shining the light on this important issue, which impacts so many of our youth today at such a crucial time in their lives when they should be focusing on discovering who they are, and building a foundation for their future. Oftentimes, victims of sexual violence on campus find themselves unable to remain focused on their studies, thus compromising their academic career.

I am here today to state support for the main concepts in HB 5029, An act concerning Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus. I would like to thank the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee for their hard work on this important issue.

It is important that victims of sexual violence on campus make informed choices regarding how they handle their assault, and for that they need clear, concise, written information about the choices available to them in terms of reporting, and the availability of medical and support services. Whether they choose to report to an RA, campus police, health services, or administration, the response should be uniform and comprehensive. It is common for victims to receive different responses depending on which person or system they choose to report their assault. Victims receive conflicting information, or worse, they are not afforded the opportunity to seek timely and critical services such as, forensic evidence collection and crisis intervention, for the lack of training on the part of the first responder.

School Policy should be victim centered, and should mirror the community's response to victims of sexual violence, where adults make their own choices as to whether they report to police or seek other services. Assuring confidentiality for victims of sexual violence on campus is paramount, and would likely encourage more disclosures.

In our catchment area, we serve several major colleges and Universities, including the University of Connecticut's Storrs and Avery Point campus, Eastern Connecticut State University, Connecticut College and The U.S. Coast Guard Academy. We have a memorandum

of understanding with both the University of Connecticut and the Coast Guard Academy. As a result, we are able to work as a team to offer more comprehensive and timely services to victims, as well as, to their families, and friends. As part of the MOU, we provide ongoing training for students, RAs, campus police, administrators, etc. In addition, we participate on the Community Response Teams at the schools. This has allowed us to build strong partnerships with key stakeholders, which have resulted on the development of improved policy, with our input, to address sexual violence on campus.

In short, it is a team approach, along with uniform ongoing training for first responders; and clear and concise written information for victims that would ensure the best practice response to victims of sexual violence on campus. Victims are best served when on campus resources and off campus services are coordinated and available.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify today.